

**REMARKS**

This paper is presented in response to the non-final official action of July 29, 2008, wherein (a) claims 1-8 were pending, (b) claims 1 and 5 were rejected as obvious over Joo, et al. US 6,277,324 ("Joo") in view of JP 07-188721 ("JP '721"), and (c) claims 2-4 and 6-8 were rejected as obvious over Joo in view of JP '721 and further in view of Kepplinger, et al. US 6,379,420 ("Kepplinger").

By the foregoing, claim 1 has been amended without adding new matter, and claims 6-8 have been cancelled, without prejudice. Claims 1-5 are pending and at issue.

The obviousness rejections are respectfully traversed.  
Reconsideration of the application, as amended, is solicited.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that converting the mixture into the reduced material comprises:

- (a) supplying the reducing gas to a third (of three) fluidized bed;
- (b) supplying reducing gas which passed through the third fluidized bed to a second fluidized bed;
- (c) supplying reducing gas which passed through the second fluidized bed to a first fluidized bed;
- (d) preheating the mixture in the first fluidized bed;
- (e) pre-reducing the preheated mixture in the second fluidized bed; and,
- (f) finally reducing the pre-reduced mixture in the third fluidized bed and converting the mixture into the reduced material;

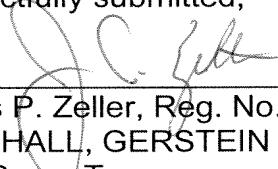
wherein oxygen gas is directly injected into the first and second fluidized bed and combusted in (d) or (e), respectively, and another oxygen gas is directly injected to the reducing gas and combusted in (a) to (c), respectively.

Thus, claim 1, as amended, effectively calls for increasing the temperature of the reducing gas by the use of an oxygen burner disposed between each of three fluidized beds. It is submitted that the references, whether taken singly or in combination, do not disclose these elements of the claims, as amended. Therefore it is submitted that the inventive method as presently claimed is patentably distinguishable from the applied references, and the obviousness rejections are therefore respectfully traversed. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the present claims are solicited.

Should the examiner wish to discuss the foregoing or any matter of form in an effort to advance this application toward allowance, she is urged to telephone the undersigned at the indicated number.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

James P. Zeller, Reg. No. 28,491  
MARSHALL, GERSTEIN & BORUN LLP  
6300 Sears Tower  
233 South Wacker Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60606-6357  
(312) 474-6300  
Attorney for Applicant